

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, SELECTBOARD, AND POLICE EQUITY AND
USE OF FORCE ADVISORY GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE VIA ZOOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Page 1 of 5

Meeting was opened at 6:01 PM by virtual attendance in the in Upstairs Meeting Room

- **Finance Committee members participating remotely:** Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison, Chris Menegoni, Franca Wisnewski (arrived 6:25), Jennifer Waryas, and John Hanold
- **Selectboard members participating remotely:** Rich Kuklewicz, Michael Nelson, and Chris Boutwell
- **Police Equity and Use of Force Advisory Group members participating remotely:** Ariel Elan, Deborah Frenkel
- **Police Community Engagement Advisory Group member participating remotely:** Chris Pinardi
- **Others participating remotely:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Director of Assessing Karen Tonelli, and Police Chief Chris Williams
- The Chair announced that the meeting is being streamed and recorded by the MCTV and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting. Remote participation for both members and the public was provided by Zoom. The link to the recording is <https://vimeo.com/516701550>.

Meeting Procedures

Ms. Audley noted briefly that non-Committee members will be recognized after Committee members have spoken, and that votes might not be taken tonight on matters on the agenda.

FY 2022 Budget Development

Update of New Growth and Revenue Projections Ms. Tonelli provided her current estimate of \$100,000 for New Growth for FY2022, a reduction from the \$150,000 in the current budget file. She provided a sheet of recent years' New Growth and described her thinking and the reasons for her cautious forecast. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of using it:

* We could adopt the lower figure; this would necessitate re-calculation of the Affordable Assessment for Gill-Montague and communicating it to the District before their meeting with us on March 3.

* We could adopt the lower figure, but use Free Cash to make up the difference and avoid recalculation of the Affordable Assessment.

* We could stay with \$150 K and hope that the results from later "Form of List" data on utility poles & wires, which is expected within a couple weeks, will be adequate to make up the shortfall.

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, SELECTBOARD, AND POLICE EQUITY AND
USE OF FORCE ADVISORY GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE VIA ZOOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Page 2 of 5

We chose the third alternative, and will keep the existing New Growth amount as our estimate. No other changes to revenue projections were proposed.

=====

Review of budget requests: (141) Assessor, (211) Police, (212) Dispatch, (122) Selectboard, (151) Legal, and (910) Benefits

Assessor (Department 141) Ms. Tonelli is considering adding a part-time position as field assessor to replace a retiring clerk, but her budget preserves the current staff level in case she keeps the same job descriptions. Changes in State requirements align with Montague's current approach, but the requested Special Article for \$13,130 is still necessary to hire a specialist in natural gas and electricity assets.

Ms. Audley asked if the special article could become a part of the operating budget, if securing these special services will be on-going, but Ms. Tonelli feels the need is more variable.

A vote on the department budget was deferred to give Ms. Tonelli additional time to complete her evaluation of her needs.

Dispatch (Department 212) Mr. Hanold reported his email exchange with Dispatch Supervisor Odle. Ms. Odle says her staff is complete and fully trained. A transfer of dispatching responsibilities to Shelburne Control, eliminates the \$1.00 hourly shift differential paid to dispatchers for handling fire calls and the corresponding reimbursement from the TFFD. Additionally, Shelburne Control is now doing the EMD (emergency medical dispatching) which eliminates the annual \$3,000 fee to MedCare. There were no other questions.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Dispatch Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$310,291.
Vote: Audley–Aye, Bowman-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

Selectboard moved: To approve the Dispatch Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$310,291.
Vote: Kuklewicz –Aye, Nelson- Aye, Boutwell-Aye.

Police (Department 211) Chief Williams provided an revised vehicle inventory and the results of some research about various towns' arrangements for funding School Resource Officers (SROs). He said the implementation of the Police Operations Standards Training (POST) legislation would occur gradually, and that his budget request is unchanged in scope and staffing from his FY21

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, SELECTBOARD, AND POLICE EQUITY AND
USE OF FORCE ADVISORY GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE VIA ZOOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Page 3 of 5

plans – except for restoring the reduction voted at the May 2020 Annual Town Meeting. He noted that the unfunded state mandate for school districts to have School Resource Officers has been eliminated. Several members of the Finance Committee indicated support for a future renegotiation of the MPD's MOU with the GMRSD to increase the amount that the district reimburses the department for its SRO.

Mr. Hanold remarked that the Annual meeting vote to reduce funding was 39 – 37 with the possibility that two Committee members reversed their prior support of the department. Ms. Audley replied that events which occurred after the Committee's supporting vote were responsible for the vote change in her own case. Ms. Wisnewski asked about changes resulting from the activities of the Police Advisory Groups, but the groups have not submitted their reports.

A vote on the Police budget was deferred to allow time for further discussion.

Selectboard (Department 122) Mr. Ellis reported that he is willing to delete the \$6,000 added for entry-door monitoring since this cost will be covered by grants and is no longer necessary.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Selectboard Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$194,971 (amended down from \$200,971).

Vote: Audley –Aye, Bowman-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

Selectboard moved: To approve Selectboard Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$194,971 (amended down from \$200,971).

Vote: Kuklewicz –Aye, Nelson- Aye, Boutwell-Aye.

Legal (Department 151) The six-month results through December 2020 are about two months behind due to late billing. Unusual effort by Town Counsel Corbo will be covered by CARES funding, but other projects (e.g., 5th St. pedestrian bridge) still require attention. Preparation for contract negotiations may begin before FY22 starts.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Legal Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$85,000.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Bowman-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

Selectboard moved: To approve the Legal Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$85,000

Vote: Kuklewicz –Aye, Nelson- Aye, Boutwell-Aye.

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, SELECTBOARD, AND POLICE EQUITY AND
USE OF FORCE ADVISORY GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE VIA ZOOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Page 4 of 5

Benefits (Department 910) Ms. Olsen answered questions on this department, which is not susceptible to Committee amendment. The reduction in Non-contributory Retirement is an artifact of legislation from the time when employees sent to war were granted a benefit, but the eligible employees are fewer. Aside from determination of correct employee headcount (it contains two new Grounds employees still under consideration) there were no questions.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Benefits Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$2,461,867.
Vote: Audley –Aye, Bowman-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas – Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

Selectboard moved: To approve the Benefits Fiscal Year 2022 Budget of \$2,461,867.
Vote: Kuklewicz –Aye, Nelson- Aye, Boutwell-Aye.

Prepare for February 25, 2021 Special Town Meeting

Mr. Ellis described changes in meeting protocol after the two test-run sessions. The primary change is that permission to speak will be requested via VVoter but granted by Ms. Bogusz on the Moderator's direction. Ms. Audley solicited expressions of interest in speaking on various Articles on the Warrant. The conclusion was:

- Art.1 – To hold Town Meeting virtually: No speaker necessary
- Art. 2 – To revise scope of prior Parks & Recreation Special Article Wisnewski
- Art. 3 – To amend Schedule II stipend for Emergency Management Director from \$5,765 to \$7,500 Audley
- Art. 4 –To increase FY21 budget for Department 155 Info Technology by \$12,000 Audley
- Art. 5 – To approve \$215,000 for gas chlorination replacement system Garrison
- Art. 6 – To approve First Year lease payment of \$70,000 for sludge dewatering press Garrison
- Art. 7 – To approve \$71,150 for Chestnut Hill Bridge replacement Bowman
- Art. 8 – To approve borrowing \$1,450,000 for purchase of Pioneer Aviation property Menegoni
- Art. 9 – To approve borrowing \$68,000 to upgrade fuel management station at Airport Menegoni
- Art. 10 – To increase Airport operating budget by \$39,800 Menegoni

Approve Meeting Minutes

Review of the minutes for February 17 will be deferred to March 10.

Updates from Town Administrator and Town Accountant

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, SELECTBOARD, AND POLICE EQUITY AND
USE OF FORCE ADVISORY GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE VIA ZOOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Page 5 of 5

No updates were presented, beyond those already covered.

Topics Not Anticipated within 48 Hours and Requests for Future Agendas

No late news was reported.

Agendas for Future Meetings

March 3 – Gill-Montague Regional School District and Franklin County Technical School

March 10 – Board of Health, Airport, Town Meeting and Emergency Management Director

March 17 – Review DPW, Capital Improvements Committee Report

Adjournment

Finance Committee Moved: To adjourn at 8:02 PM.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye,
Wisnewski-Aye, Waryas –Aye

Selectboard Moved: To adjourn 8:02 PM.

Vote: Kuklewicz –Aye, Nelson- Aye, Boutwell-Aye.

Respectfully submitted by John Hanold

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Requests
- Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Narratives
- Chart of New Growth 2010 – 2022
- Additional Materials supplied by Police Department